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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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CASE STUDY--IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS\*

Mr. Henry Madison has been the Negro county agent in Jackson county for 10 years. The people in the county have great respect for him and what he has been able to do. Under his leadership, commercial poultry growing has progressed from a few farmers interested in broiler production to the second major industry in the county. There is a large dairy production and Mr. Madison is credited with having great influence on the development of this industry.

He has excellent ideas and farm people know that he is well trained in agriculture. They know that what he tells them is backed up by research but they have been known to wish that he took them in on his ideas early -- instead of waiting until he has worked out all the answers himself.

Mr. Madison grew up on a farm--the youngest son of a large family. Mr. Madison is married and has 2 sons of his own aged 8 and 11. He is a member of the church and a good contributor. Last year he became a deacon.

The Negro Livestock Association was formed in Jackson County 4 years ago under the leadership of Mr. Madison. Membership in this Association has been falling off. Mr. Madison is at a loss to explain this. Mr. Madison thinks, however, that a small group of these livestock farmers has undermined his leadership of the Association.

There have been several county home demonstration agents in the county. The first one remained in the county 2 years after Mr. Madison was appointed. People still talk about her and the fine influence she has had in the county.

Relationships between the two were never very close--but each went his own way and there were never any open clashes.

She resigned to be married, and there followed for several years the appointment of several home demonstration agents. One remained 3 years but was transferred at her own request to another county. Two others stayed a year and resigned--one to go back to school and the other to be married.

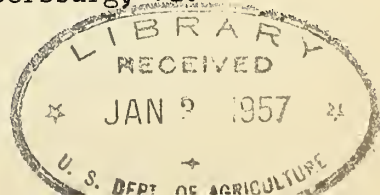
"If they are any good--we can't keep them," Mr. Madison often says.

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\*Mena Hogan, Field Agent, Southern States, USDA  
Annual Extension Conference of Virginia Negro Workers, Petersburg, Va.  
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All names are fictitious.

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The county finances are fairly low, and one extension secretary has always served the two agents. Sometimes this has worked. Sometimes it has not. "If the agents could help me decide on the really important things I ought to do first," the secretary confided once to the district supervisors. "But, Mr. Madison thinks all his things should come first--and the home demonstration agent thinks hers are the most important.

The office consists of one fairly large room and one small one opening to the hallway. Mr. Madison has the large inner-office to himself. The home demonstration agent's desk is in the small outer office with the secretary.

The district supervisors have suggested both agents share this large room. Mr. Madison feels that he needs this private office for conferring with the farmers who wish to consult with him. The home demonstration agent thinks this is a little unreasonable.

The present agent, Miss Ruby Wortham, has been in the county now for 2 years. When she came, there were only 10 home demonstration clubs. Now, however, interest in them has greatly increased and 8 new ones have been organized and 4 additional neighborhoods have requested that they be organized too.

There are seven 4-H Clubs in the county, all located in consolidated rural schools. Mr. Madison meets with the boys and Miss Wortham meets with the girls during an activity period at the school. Both agents wish they could have a regular hour but the school superintendent thinks the regular school classes should not be interrupted. The agents seldom go to the schools together. "I meet home demonstration clubs in the afternoon and must have my car!" Miss Wortham says. Mr. Madison thinks he must drive, too, since he always visits several Negro farmers in the area.

There is another problem that has developed within the county. Both agents have won the confidence of a good many school authorities on the county level. These authorities consult with the agents individually on many local school matters that are not directly related to extension program. Local school people resent this, thinking that the agents are meddling in school affairs particularly when the agents are asked to relay to them information on school administration and personnel.

The county school authorities mean well. They have respect for the work, the agents, and their good judgment. To the officials this is just a direct approach to their problem of school administration. It also saves them time, effort, and travel.

This situation, however, is creating a growing group in Jackson County antagonistic to extension work. Since there is no other way of showing their resentment to what they believe is interference of the agents, they take their rancor out on the program.

There is also some feeling about this between Mr. Madison and Miss Wortham, for there is an element of local recognition involved in thus being consulted, and each tends to vie for the honor.

Miss Wortham grew up in a family of 5 sisters on a rather poor farm. By teaching school and working hard all the sisters completed high school and Ruby went on to college. Ruby was probably the most ambitious of the sisters--but they loved her--and had pride in doing the things Ruby expected of them. At times she wanted them to do things she herself had not had the opportunity to do. Ruby had taught 6 years before she had had time to go back to Virginia State College and finish her home economics work.

Upon her graduation, she came to Jackson County as county home demonstration agent. She likes her new work but she wishes there were more days in her week. She would like to go to every home demonstration club every month. "They lose interest if I don't," she thinks. There are also the seven 4-H Clubs to visit each month.

The two agents see each other every day in passing and are friendly but they do little planning together. "When I brought her in on a fair planning meeting," Mr. Madison told his district supervisor, "she said she had a home demonstration club meeting." "He asked me only the day before," Miss Wortham confided to her district home demonstration agent, "and I didn't have time to let the club know I wouldn't be there." "She goes her way, and I go mine," Mr. Madison says.

"He plans something and then he tells me about it--expecting me to drop everything and do what he wants to do," she says.

Now the county has been selected to do farm and home development work.

As Mr. Madison and Miss Wortham take part in the State Extension conference on farm and home development, they have been listening closely to three points.

1. Agents must work as a team and with the whole family.
2. Agents must help families make their own decisions--based upon their goals. not the agents'.
3. The farm and the home are mutually interdependent--one cannot prosper at the expense of the other.

These basic ideas are not in themselves new to Mr. Madison and Miss Wortham. As they attempt, however, to make an application of them to their own county, they see that they have a problem-- a problem particularly of human relations.







